

**Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Syracuse Junior High School
1450 South 2000 West
Syracuse, Utah 84075**

April 12-13, 2005



Utah State Office of Education
250 East 500 South
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Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

**THE REPORT OF THE
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**Syracuse Junior High School
1450 South 2000 West
Syracuse, Utah 84075**

April 12-13, 2005

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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State Superintendent of Public Instruction**

**DIVISION OF
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS**

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Salt Lake City, Utah

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FOREWORD

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, April 12-13, 2005, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of Syracuse Junior High School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the Visiting Team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Dr. Robinette Bowden is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Syracuse Junior High School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at Syracuse Junior High School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent
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Chris Wahlquist	Director, Research & Assessment

SYRACUSE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Dr. Robinette Bowden Principal
Mitri Muna Assistant Principal
Pam Mitchell Assistant Principal

Counseling

Debbie McDonald Counselor
Teena Carper Counselor

Support Staff

Patricia G. Poll Principal/ Finance Secretary
Sue Moss Attendance Secretary

Faculty

Howard Adams	Jason Duckworth	Anjanette Poll
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Kayloa Anderson	Ben Elmer	Zachary Poulter
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Adrienne Ashton	Kim Hadfield	Madeleine Ray
Steven Barnes	Jodi Hamblin	Douglas Sill
Janell Bemis	Bruce Illum	Sunny Smith
Lindsay Benson	Mary Jensen	Christine Stephens
David Bryan	Aaron Johnson	Alexandra Stoker
Kerry Bullard	John Johnson	Ashlee Willets
John Calvin	Kristie Karren	Annie Williams
Christopher Carter	Rosann Ludlow	Sandra Wilsey
Jill Corry	Trisha Martinez	Wayne Winters
Todd Dallinga	Jan Nash	
Christen DeGroot	Dave Nielsen	

SYRACUSE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

To prepare students for a complex, changing world by helping them grow in mind, body and character.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

We believe that all students can learn and that learning is the chief priority of the school.

We believe each student is a unique individual with physical, emotional, social, and intellectual differences, and possessing different learning styles and abilities.

We believe students learn best when actively engaged in solving problems, thinking critically, and producing quality work as well as by acquiring facts and knowledge.

We believe students should master the basic skills and useful knowledge valued in the past as well as explore and learn the communication and technological skills necessary for the present and the future.

We believe that shaping and building character is as essential as the acquisition of knowledge and demonstration of skill.

We believe it is our responsibility to provide a safe learning environment in which positive relationships and mutual respect are honored and nurtured.

We believe that strengthening the body and developing healthy habits is as important as acquiring knowledge.

We believe that the fine arts, music, the humanities, and the practical arts are critical elements of a complete education.

We believe that the administrators, the school staff, the family, and the community share in the responsibility of education our youth.

We believe that any successful education is the responsibility of three groups; professional and highly trained teachers, involved parents, and responsible students.

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Craig Jessop, Wahlquist Junior High, Weber School District,
Visiting Team Chairperson

David H. Smith, Oak Canyon Junior High, Alpine School District

Karla Porter, Roy High School, Weber School District

Marni Davis, Tooele Junior High, Tooele County School District

Haley Q. Petersen, Tooele Junior High, Tooele County School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT
SYRACUSE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Syracuse Junior High first opened in 1986. Since that time the community, which was once largely rural, has and is experiencing tremendous growth in homes and subdivisions. Between 2000 and 2004 the city grew by nearly 10,000 inhabitants.

Due to the area's rapid growth, the school recently underwent a major boundary shift. In addition to a large loss in student population (and some students who came into Syracuse from a different junior high trying to fit in), approximately half of the staff changed as well. Syracuse Junior High has little ethnic diversity, but economic diversity is apparent.

The school has had just three principals, one of whom served eleven years. Syracuse Junior High has adopted a middle school philosophy, even though the ninth grade, housed largely in a ninth grade center, is part of the school. This is Syracuse's second accreditation under the new method. The first term of accreditation was for three years.

a) What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?

The change in boundaries not only changed the population count, it also changed the makeup of the student body. The impact of the new students needs to receive further study.

Data based on the school's grades over the last 2.5 years indicates that more than 65 percent of students are receiving A and B grades. Another 12-17 percent of students receive C grades. However, 27 percent are receiving D and F grades. Criterion-Referenced Test (CRT) results clearly show that ethnicity and language ability play a role in how students achieve on the tests.

b) What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?

It is suggested that answers to the following questions be included the next school profile: What percentage of the student body is taking advantage of the activity bus? How many students are using bus transportation because of participation in multiple activities?

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- What effect does the school's focus on the "body" have on academic performance?

- Do the students from the new boundary area have a great impact the school's overall performance?

CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

- a) *To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?*

The self-study is exhaustive in its breadth. The school community, including students, parents, teachers and staff members has given input on many areas of performance. Major interpretation of the data was performed by school personnel. Departments looked carefully at their performance, collaboration, use of technology, methods of evaluation, etc. Strengths and weaknesses were noted. Focus groups also looked critically at the school's current status and rated each area using the NSSE rubric.

- b) *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

The test data speaks for itself. There are weaknesses, but these were examined and duly noted. The departmental studies also appear to be very accurate. If anything, focus groups tended to rate the school lower than the actual achievement levels.

CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Syracuse Junior High School's desired results for student learning (DRSLs) are as follows:

1. Mind: Mastering Essential Skills and Knowledge
2. Body: Building Healthy Lifestyles
3. Character: Developing Good Citizenship

Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

- a) *To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?*

Syracuse Junior High has been involved in creating an acceptable mission statement for many years. Because of the opening of a new junior high and the loss of many teachers, the faculty and staff have gone through countless revisions and changes to this statement. During this process, many staff members became frustrated and concerned that even though they had met and discussed ideas time and time again, progress was not being made.

Faculty members recognized this frustration and realized they were trying to encompass too much information into their mission statement. A decision was made to simplify all ideas into the embodiment of developing the mind, body, and character of the individual student. Through this process, Syracuse Junior High has developed a very strong mission statement that is embraced by all those who have ownership in the school. Great effort has been made by all staff members to develop a cohesive statement that is passionately felt by all. Administrators, teachers, custodians, secretaries, cooks, aides, business owners, parents, and students were actively involved in creating the school's current mission statement.

- b) *To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?*

At the beginning of this process, Syracuse Junior High understood the importance of having all staff members involved in voicing their opinions in developing belief statements. Meetings were held, and all ideas and feelings were accepted, discussed and noted. A lengthy list was composed representing these ideas. From this list, ideas were combined, altered, or eliminated. The current set of belief statements represents those feelings held strongly by all Syracuse Junior High staff members.

These statements represent the development and education of the entire student body and the commitment level of all staff members to the achievement and success of all. Because all staff members were considered important in forming these beliefs, staff members are committed to their implementation.

- c) *To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?*

Syracuse Junior High has done an outstanding job of aligning the DRSLs to the school's mission and belief statements. All belief statements are represented in one of the categories of the DRSLs. Under the categories of mind, body, and character are indicators that correlate with each area. These indicators represent those areas that would best guarantee the successful development of all students.

Staff members are not only committed to the development and mastery of these skills, but have plans to create a rubric that would act as a helpful tool in determining their completion. Staff members should be commended on their insight into continuing to find ways of encouraging and implementing their plan.

Curriculum Development:

- a) *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?*

The staff members at Syracuse Junior High has made significant efforts to work collaboratively to ensure that they are teaching appropriate curriculum. Each teacher works to align the Utah State Core Curriculum in his or her content area with the school's chosen DRSLs – Mind, Body, and Character. Daily curriculum objectives are clearly stated for the students to see in almost every classroom. The students are aware of the DRSLs and understand the connection between them and the teacher's learning objectives.

The Curriculum Development Focus Group worked to coordinate curricula among different departments. The goal of the focus group was to have each department create a curriculum map for each content area's core standards. These maps were based around a set of essential questions taken from the core. The maps that have already been developed are being followed closely by those staff members involved. Other staff members and departments have maps that are still works in progress, yet they see the vision and importance of curriculum mapping and are working toward the goal of the focus group.

- b) *To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?*

Every curriculum goal at Syracuse Junior High is developed to directly support the DRSLs. Teachers within departments who teach the same subject often work together and strictly follow their map. By doing so, they are able to share ideas with one another to find what best serves the interests of the students.

One excellent example of a collaborative effort at Syracuse is the Job Shadow Day for the 9th grade students. The counseling staff works with the students to decide what their career interests are, set goals, and find a job shadow placement. The geography teachers discuss the job shadow with the students and make it a requirement for their classes. To culminate the project, the language arts teachers do several follow-up writing activities with the students to reflect upon their job shadow experience.

Other examples of collaborative curriculum supporting the DRSLs include a cross-curricular math/art project in which the students learned about and designed a tessellation, a planned science/art project to create an Earth Day poster, 7th grade teaming to encourage student achievement by merging topics in the core classes, and so on.

Quality Instructional Design:

- a) *To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?*

Visits to the classrooms of Syracuse Junior High School allowed the Visiting Team to witness engaged students. This engagement was due, in part, to the mutual respect of the teachers and students. Several examples were found of teachers who trusted their students enough to experiment with learning strategies. Though, at times, direct instruction is a necessary part of the educational experience, teachers in this school understand and appreciate the need for varied instructional strategies. Some of the strategies the Visiting Team found include hands-on and practical life experiences, small group readings, group writing activities, performance, and student demonstration. A highlight of this visit was a trip to a 9th grade science living outdoor laboratory where students worked with all three DRSLs while gaining valuable experience with earth systems.

- b) *To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?*

In addition to a hallway of teachers using varied instructional strategies, many individual teachers were making use of varied instruction in daily activities. In many of the classrooms that were visited the Visiting Team found agendas. In reading the agenda it became apparent that teachers were adapting subject material to match the learning styles of different students. For example, one 8th grade science class began with a journal entry, then moved into an assessment of effort and resistance force; next came a trio reading activity, and the class concluded with a final broom activity. While all of this was going on, students were free to question other students for additional explanation. The teacher expressed that part of the activity was a result of a recent class she had attended about teaching reading in all subject areas. This teacher is just one example of the many teachers making an effort to include all students who can be found in this school.

- c) *To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?*

As one parent put it, this school has higher academic expectations of its students than many other schools do. The Visiting Team found several innovative strategies this school uses to help all students become the best they can be. For example, they have implemented an extended lunch/advisory period. Instead of the average thirty-minute lunch, teachers and students have a combined 45 minutes for lunch and advising. Teachers hold students from the class prior to lunch for up to 15 minutes to give them additional time to work when students are missing assignments. The missing assignments extend beyond the individual teachers' classrooms. While acting as the students' advisors, they regularly check the students' grades and assignments in the computer. The students who are failing or have missing

assignments in any class are the students that are held for 15 minutes prior to having lunch.

Another lunchtime activity for the struggling students is Lunch and Learn. Students participating in this activity have been referred to the program. During Lunch and Learn students are offered a supported independent study opportunity.

Finally, the students have four chances per week (Monday through Thursday) to attend free tutoring. The leadership of these tutoring sessions fluctuates between an English and a math teacher. The teachers are assisted by high school students. Because of the school's after-school activity bus, which runs on the same days, many students who would not normally be able to participate in after-school activities such as tutoring can reap the benefits of the program.

Quality Assessment Systems:

- a) *To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?*

Syracuse exhibits extremely high expectations for student achievement in coordinating their curricula and assessments. This was stated during the accreditation visit by school staff members and by students, but it was also reflected upon by parents and community members. All agree that doing well in the classroom is a significant and consistent emphasis at Syracuse Junior High. Students who are doing poorly and failing a class are required to spend part or all of their lunch period completing work, either for 15 minutes with a teacher or for 45 minutes in the Lunch and Learn program. Students also have other opportunities to attend after-school tutoring and meet one-on-one with teachers.

Each individual teacher at Syracuse uses a variety of assessment strategies appropriate for his or her students, including informal assessments such as questioning students, raising a thumb up or putting it down, raising a hand for the correct multiple-choice answer, allowing students to call out responses freely, etc. Formal assessment strategies are also used, such as cooperative learning projects, traditional quizzes and tests, various reading guides, CRTs and SATs, goal setting, class projects and presentations, class discussions, charting and graphing progress, using optional assessments to accommodate students with physical limitations, role-play, etc.

- b) *To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?*

Every aspect of the curriculum and assessment at Syracuse is aligned with the performance standards. The curriculum being assessed is the Utah State Core Curriculum (for subject areas in which it applies), which has its own standards and

objectives to be assessed in each individual content area. The DRSLs have been designed to align the needs of the school population with the State Core. The students and staff are fluent in their mission statement and DRSLs to the extent that every aspect of the school day can be classified as an assessment of mind, body, or character.

The teachers emphasize the DRSLs in their classrooms, and the students are aware of what is expected. Examples of this emphasis seen during the accreditation visit include excellent classroom instructional practices promoting student learning (Mind); intramural activities, vending machine restrictions, healthy lunch choices, and an emphasis on physical health as it applies in each subject area (Body); and goal setting, appropriate communication skills, and reinforcement of good citizenship with “Caught Being Good” coins and use of the “Game Room.” Opportunities for after-school activities such as athletics, music, drama, and after-school shop class, as well as the availability of an after-school activity bus, all encourage students to buy in to and promote the community of the school (Character).

- c) *To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?*

During the accreditation visit, all assessments being used and described were shown to be fair and equitable. The staff at Syracuse Junior High uses a variety of assessment strategies (as described above) to ensure that all students have an opportunity to succeed and do well. The school has extremely high academic standards and those standards are met in a fair manner.

Leadership for School Improvement:

- a) *To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?*

The leadership of Syracuse Junior High is actively engaged in promoting high academic expectations. Teachers and departments have been empowered to make curriculum decisions and set departmental goals. Syracuse Junior is actively pursuing the International Baccalaureate School designation to enhance the education of more motivated students. Multiple options are available for students who need remediation, including after-school tutoring, Lunch and Learn, three levels of reading assistance, and school trackers.

- b) *To what extent does leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?*

The leadership not only encourages teachers to read current educational literature, but provides books for the entire staff. This year's book is *Understanding by Design* by McTighe and Wiggins.

The school has adopted Read 180, which is a research-based reading program. The school's data shows that this program works better for students who are not the lowest-end readers, but helps students who are in the two-years-behind grouping make substantial gains.

The DRSLs chosen by the faculty and endorsed by the leadership team are well aligned with the surveys filled out by parents, students, teachers, and staff members.

- c) *To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?*

The school leadership has provided a case management team consisting of the Counseling Department, administration, and a representative of the Special Education Department. This team is to assess the needs of students who are struggling in school and have, for one reason or another, been referred to the team. Many opportunities for academic help and remediation have been provided. Departments and focus groups are encouraged and mandated to reflect on their goals and progress.

A rubric for the school's DRSLs and indicators is being developed to assist teachers with the assessment of their own progress based on those DRSLs.

The leadership team monitors the number of Fs received by students, and those who fail a class are placed in a program that gives them an additional 15 minutes per day to work with a teacher in a small group environment.

- d) *To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?*

Syracuse Junior High has a ninth grade center that is somewhat separate from other parts of the school. This separation provides less contact between older and younger students. In addition, teachers are encouraged to be in the hallways during class breaks. The administrative team is often out in the school even during class time. Students and staff members stated there are very few conflicts among the students. Ethnicity is not an important factor in student interaction. Students are accepted for who they are.

However, the surveys do not totally support the stated feeling of the students and staff members. Bullying in the halls makes some students feel unsafe despite efforts to make everyone feel comfortable.

- e) *To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLS, and school improvement efforts?*

The allocation of school funds is controlled by the leadership; however, teachers feel that their needs are carefully considered and, where possible, tools and services are purchased for the good of the students. Examples of these expenditures include after-school tutoring, Read 180, school trackers, a suspension prevention aide, and International Baccalaureate. Additionally, individual departments' needs and desires to improve students' educational opportunities are carefully considered and fulfilled as far as possible.

- f) *To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?*

The leadership team and staff members described a growing process in which the leadership team gradually gave more and more responsibility to the teachers and focus groups. This process happened over a period of three years, as the teachers grew more and more confident in their understanding of the purpose and process of accreditation and self-evaluation. The leadership team is now confident that the process can and will continue because of teacher ownership and vision. Parents were also repeatedly invited to participate, but, unfortunately, not many chose to be intimately involved. Those who are involved are pleased with the progress and vision at Syracuse Junior High.

Community Building:

- a) *To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?*

The Syracuse Junior High faculty has high levels of input in decision making. The school builds working relationships within the school by using focus groups, which seems to have allowed teachers to think outside their departments. Teacher relationships have strengthened because of these focus groups, and also because of the genuine self-study that has occurred during the accreditation process. An example of the community building exhibited by the school is the teaming happening in 7th grade, along with the Student-Led Conferences.

Another way Syracuse Junior High School shows its working relationships within the school is the many programs to help students. Some of the programs include the SOS; the Local Case Management Team; extra academic help before, during, and after school; and after-school activities, along with the late bus that services these students.

The Visiting Team noticed a need to align and coordinate teacher and student programs. Also, the school should continue striving to help both high-achieving and at-risk student populations. The school should ensure that the school improvement plan is known throughout the school community.

- b) *To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?*

“Everything they can do in the best interest of students,” is a quote from the parent group. The Visiting Team found that the school was “determined” to communicate and involve the parents of the school. An example was found in the response to parent/teacher conference problems. The school addressed, in part, problems the parents found in the format of the conferences. Communication with parents was timely and effective from both the administration and teachers. Business partnerships were evident, and community support was found in Hispanic discussion groups, Career Day activities, SEOPs, Job Shadowing, and career interviews.

Connection with both feeder elementary schools and receiving high schools shows collaborative networks with other school communities. The use of high school tutors also involves the outside community in Syracuse Junior High.

Syracuse Junior High School needs to continue to strive to involve more parents in the educational process.

Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:

- a) *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

Syracuse Junior High School builds capacity for improvement through the real and honest use of the accreditation model for school improvement. The self-study process has allowed for a systematic way of finding ways to improve.

Ongoing professional development has occurred using McTighe and Wiggins’ book *Understanding by Design*. Also, professional seminars are often attended, including conferences on gifted and talented students, middle schools, ESL, math, and others. The administration supports training by offering to pay for substitute teachers for participating educators.

Continued professional development in the use of technology in the classroom is one need noticed by the Visiting Team.

- b) *To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?*

The accreditation process has helped Syracuse Junior High School create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement. Many teachers commented about how this has “empowered the teachers.” The faculty is interested in productive change evidenced in teaming and the IB/Spectrum programs. They are interested in what will work. They try a thing, and keep at it; if it does not work, they remark “dispose of it” and find something else. Examples include remediation, 15-minute lunch program, Lunch and Learn, and the tracking program. They also seek parent feedback on school programs.

There is a need for the whole faculty to reexamine and focus professional development next year, the year after the accreditation visit, was expressed. A focus on finding new and effective ways to help at-risk populations within the school should continue. The final school improvement plan, with accompanying goals, should be known throughout the school.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI

Most Utah public junior high/middle schools are not accredited through NAAS, only by USOE – it is their choice to join NAAS or not. Syracuse Junior High School has applied for NAAS accreditation and will be accredited starting with the 2005-2006 school year.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

- a) *To what extent is the school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?*

The school-wide action plan is extensive. Every indicator for the DRSLs is addressed by statements regarding “what, who, and when.” The Visiting Team suggested the plan be prioritized to avoid the attempt to take on too much too quickly.

- b) *To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?*

Teachers, the accreditation leadership team, and administrators are committed to the plan. This commitment has grown as the plan has developed. Community support is

evident, but the number of parents willing to put in time appears to be limited. This, however, is not for lack of effort on the school's part. Davis School District appears to be fully behind the school and administration in their efforts toward continuous improvement.

- c) *How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the school-wide action plan appear to be?*

The action plan has provided within itself a person or group that is responsible for each action step. The level of commitment and ownership exhibited by the staff and leadership lead the Visiting Team to believe that plans will go forward as planned, or be changed to better benefit the students of Syracuse Junior High in the coming years.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends the effort, honesty, and teamwork Syracuse Junior High demonstrated throughout the accreditation process.
- The Visiting Team commends the level of respect modeled by the teachers and reciprocated by the students in this school.
- The Visiting Team commends the integration of the mission statement, beliefs, and DRSLs into each and every classroom.
- The Visiting Team commends the high standard of academic expectations placed on the students by the faculty and administration of Syracuse Junior High School. This includes the offering of multiple remediation opportunities that provide all students with the chance to feel successful.
- The Visiting Team commends the administration for its leadership in moving the school toward a complete and beautifully aligned plan. This commendation is given particularly in light of the school's previous accreditation experience, just three years ago. The Visiting Team gives special commendation to Principal Bowden for allowing and encouraging the accreditation team to take ownership of the process and product.
- The Visiting Team commends the accreditation leadership team and all staff members for rising to the challenge to start over again and take responsibility for the plan and its implementation.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that the school first choose steps in the action plan that will produce the most immediate results, then fit the other steps in after the initial plans are underway.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school investigate the possibility of placing additional 7th and 8th grade teachers into teams to allow more time and opportunity for interdisciplinary collaboration.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school continue to seek and encourage more parental involvement.
- The Visiting Team witnessed a variety of excellent, effective instructional methods. The Visiting Team recommends teacher-presented in-service in these varied instructional strategies to encourage a diversification of teaching styles among staff members and departments.